

**In Absentia Hearing**

A hearing conducted without the alien's presence after the alien failed to appear as required.

**Individual Calendar Hearing**

Hearings scheduled by the Immigration Court for testimony and evidence. These hearings are also known as "merits hearings."

**IJ**

An abbreviation for Immigration Judge.

**IRCA**

An abbreviation for the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

**IIRIRA**

An abbreviation for the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996.

**LIFE**

An abbreviation for Legal Immigration and Family Equity Act.

**LODGED ASYLUM APPLICATION**

A defensive asylum application that is submitted at the Immigration Court filing window outside of a hearing for the purpose of employment authorization. The lodged date is not the filing date and a lodged asylum application is not considered filed. A respondent who lodges an asylum application must still file an asylum application before an Immigration Judge at a master calendar hearing.

**LPR**

An abbreviation for lawful permanent resident.

**Master Calendar Hearing**

Hearings held for pleadings, scheduling, and other similar matters. A respondent's first appearance before an Immigration Judge in removal proceedings is at a master calendar hearing.

**Merits Hearing**

A term sometimes used to refer to an individual calendar hearing.

**NACARA**

An abbreviation for the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act.

**Notice Attorney**

A term sometimes used in Immigration Court to refer to the primary attorney.

**Notice to Appear**

The charging document (Form I-862) used by the Department of Homeland Security to begin removal proceedings.

**NTA**

An abbreviation for Notice to Appear.

**OCIJ**

An abbreviation for the Office of the Chief Immigration Judge.

**Office of the Chief Immigration Judge**

The part of the Executive Office for Immigration Review that oversees the Immigration Courts.

**OIL**

The abbreviation for the Office of Immigration Litigation, a part of the United States Department of Justice.

**Order to Show Cause**

The charging document (Form I-221) used by the Department of Homeland Security before April 1, 1997, to begin deportation proceedings.

**OSC**

An abbreviation for Order to Show Cause.

**Party**

The term used to refer to the alien or the Department of Homeland Security in Immigration Court.

**Petitioner**

A person who files a visa petition.

**Practitioner**

A person who is authorized to represent aliens before the Immigration Courts and the Board of Immigration Appeals.

**Pre-Decision Motion**

A motion filed before the conclusion of Immigration Court proceedings.

**Primary Attorney**

An attorney who has properly entered an appearance with the Immigration Court in a particular case and is designated to receive mailings from the court, including notices of hearings. If, at any time, more than one attorney represents an alien, one of the attorneys must be designated as the primary attorney. Only the primary attorney, also known as the “notice attorney,” will receive mailings from the Immigration Court.

**Pro Se**

A term used to refer to an alien who does not have an attorney or representative in Immigration Court.

**Proof of Service**

A formal statement in which a party shows that he or she has provided a copy of a document to the other party.

**REAL ID**

An abbreviation for the REAL ID Act of 2005.

**Reasonable Fear Proceedings**

Immigration Court proceedings in which an Immigration Judge reviews a finding by a Department of Homeland Security asylum officer that an alien subject to expedited removal under INA §§ 238(b) or 241(a)(5) does not have a reasonable fear of persecution or torture.

**Record of Proceedings**

The official file containing documents relating to an alien’s case.

**Removal Proceedings**

An Immigration Court proceeding begun on or after April 1, 1997, to determine whether a person can be admitted to the United States or removed from the United States.

**Reputable Individual**

An individual who possesses good moral character and meets certain other requirements. In appropriate circumstances, an Immigration Judge may allow a reputable individual to represent an alien in Immigration Court proceedings.

**Respondent**

A person in removal or deportation proceedings.

**ROP**

An abbreviation for Record of Proceedings.

**Serve**

To give, deliver, or mail a document to the opposing party. For an alien, the opposing party is the Department of Homeland Security.

**Stay**

An order by an Immigration Judge, or a rule of law, that stops the Department of Homeland Security from removing an alien.

**Transcript**

A printed copy of the recording of a hearing before an Immigration Judge.

**Trial Attorney**

A term sometimes used to refer to an Assistant Chief Counsel.

**USCIS**

An abbreviation for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, a part of the Department of Homeland Security.

**Visa Petition**

A form asking the Department of Homeland Security to determine if an alien is qualified to become a lawful permanent resident. Filing the visa petition is the first step in obtaining lawful permanent resident status (a “green card”).

**Withholding-Only Proceedings**

Immigration Court proceedings in which an alien is limited to applying for withholding of removal (“restriction on removal”) under the INA and protection under CAT. Withholding-only proceedings involve certain aliens who are not entitled to be placed in removal proceedings.